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Governor Martin O'Malley and Share Our Strength® Announce Partnership to End Childhood Hunger in Maryland

Governor Vows to Be First State to End Childhood Hunger

Baltimore, Md. (Nov. 24, 2008)—Maryland Governor Martin O'Malley and Share Our Strength today announced the Partnership to End Childhood Hunger in Maryland. "More than 184,000 kids in Maryland don't have ready or reliable access to the food they need to lead healthy, active lives," says Governor O'Malley. "That's inexcusable. I want Maryland to be the first state to end childhood hunger, and I'm confident that this Partnership will help us achieve this goal. Share Our Strength® has a national strategy to end childhood hunger. We will adjust it to address our specific challenges in Maryland."

The Partnership will help reach children at risk of hunger in Maryland by increasing participation in highly effective but under-utilized federal food and nutrition programs like food stamps (Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program), the Summer Food Service Program, School Lunch and School Breakfast Programs, and the Child and Adult Care Food Program. By increasing participation in these programs, the Partnership will bring additional federal funds to the State of Maryland and help stimulate the local economy.

In Maryland, 152,000 children live below the poverty line. This partnership has set a number of goals to increase participation in programs that help reach Maryland children in need. For example, during the 2009 school year, the partnership's goal is to increase by 20 percent the number of licensed childcare centers participating in the Child and Adult Care Food Program, which provides nutritious meals and snacks each day as part of their care. The number of participating child care centers would rise from 564 to 677.

Maryland already ranks in the top 10 nationwide for summer meal service participation. The Partnership intends to improve on that strong record by bringing summer meals to 49,000 more children in 2009 than in 2008.

In Maryland, nearly 87,000 households with children participate in the Food Supplement Program (food stamps). The Partnership has set a goal of increasing this by 10 percent to reach approximately 8,700 additional households in need in 2009.

Today, only 14.48 percent of Maryland's schoolchildren receive school breakfast each year. In 2009, the Partnership intends to increase the participation rate by 9 percent and ensure that 65,000 more children in Maryland receive school breakfast, which is critical to a child's ability to learn.

"Our strategy to end childhood hunger is based on closing the gaps between existing public and private programs and the families who need them," says Billy Shore, founder of Share Our Strength, a national organization working to ensure no child in America grows up hungry. "In Maryland, as in many states, these programs are often under-utilized, keeping kids from getting three nutritious meals a day. This partnership will identify and close gaps, making sure that no child in Maryland grows up hungry."

Governor O'Malley has named the Governor's Office for Children as the lead state agency in the partnership. It is working with Share Our Strength, the state Departments of Education, Human Resources, and Health and Mental Hygiene, the U.S. Department of Agriculture, and other key public and private organizations across the state.

The Partnership to End Childhood Hunger in Maryland includes a strong coalition of organizations and agencies on the national and local level, representing the private and public sectors, including the school system, the Maryland Food Bank, Advocates for Children and Youth, and Maryland Hunger Solutions/Food Research and Action Center to implement the action plan to end childhood hunger in Maryland.

About Share Our Strength

Share Our Strength is a national organization working to make sure no kid in America grows up hungry. We weave together a net of community groups, activists and food programs to catch children at risk of hunger, and ensure they have nutritious food where they live, learn and play. We work with the culinary industry to create engaging, pioneering programs like Share Our Strength's Taste of the Nation®, Share Our Strength's Great American Bake Sale®, Share Our Strength's A Tasteful Pursuit®, Share Our Strength's Great American Dine Out®, and Share Our Strength's Operation Frontline®. For more information, please visit Strength.org.

About the Maryland Governor's Office for Children

The Governor's Office for Children (GOC) coordinates child and family-oriented care with the Children's Cabinet to create and promote an integrated, community-based service delivery system for Maryland's children, youth and families. The Children's Cabinet includes the Secretaries from the Departments of Budget and Management, Disabilities, Health and Mental Hygiene, Human Resources, and Juvenile Services, as well as the State Superintendent of Schools for the Maryland State Department of Education.

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